

14
A
TREATISE

ON

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION, 15

AND

SAVING FAITH.

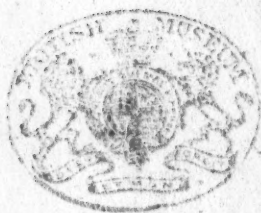
.....
IN TWO PARTS.
.....



Manchester:

PRINTED BY SOWLER AND RUSSELL, DEANSGATE.

1797.



PREFACE.

IN writing my thoughts on Christian Perfection, I had no intention of their ever appearing in public ; therefore I gave myself no trouble to consult other authors upon the subject. I intended simply to set down what I believed of the doctrine myself, without concerning myself with the opinions of others. Having shewed the manuscript to some friends, they thought it would do good, if it were printed ; but being conscious of the meanness of the performance in respect of language, or human elegance, in order to please and captivate the reader ; and being sensible (tho' what I wrote I believed was agreeable to scripture) that it would meet with opposition, I judged it prudent not

to expose it. Some time after, I read it to a judicious and pious person in the country, who, though a Predestinarian, and one that believed not in the doctrine of Christian Perfection, was desirous of it's being made public. Yet this was not sufficient to determine me, though I had had some thoughts before of doing it. I shewed it afterwards to a gentleman of good understanding, who, though holding different opinions from myself, was delighted with it, and expressed his desire also of having it published; at last, therefore, I send it abroad into the world, I venture it with all its imperfections. It is not with excellency of words that men are convinced of sin, converted to God, or built up on their most holy faith, not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, faith the Lord. As the blessing is from the Lord, and he frequently uses the

PREFACE.

v.

weakest means to bring about his purposes, I am encouraged to hope this Treatise will be productive of some good. St. Paul tells us, 1 Cor. i. 27—29, God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the ~~weak~~ things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.

THE second part was wrote about a year after the first. The beginning of it being an attempt to explain the Gospel meaning of saving or living Faith, (which appears to be but little understood even by real christians, and is therefore, as I apprehend, a hinderance to their growing in grace,) I was led to treat a little of Justi-

fication, before I entered upon the subject of Sanctification, which was the main thing designed.

IF the reader should meet with any repetitions he thinks needless, if he would but ruminate upon them, till his heart should be properly affected by them, that imperfection will be a means of unspeakable blessing to him. And should it prove so, I shall not regard the censures of the critics.

As the glory of God, and the good of souls are the things aimed at in the publishing of this Treatise, may the eternal Spirit apply whatsoever is therein agreeable to the will of God to the heart of every reader, and give the author himself to experience its full contents.

THE Editor has inserted the following Letters, believing they may be of service to induce some to read the Treatise itself, who otherwise perhaps would not, through the prejudice they have imbibed against the doctrine it treats of. The first is from a clergyman, the other from an officer in the army.

DEAR SIR,

I have finished your Treatise, and thank you for the fresh light I have received from it. I believe the children will find it meat indeed, and drink indeed. That *uniting, mingling, fellowship* faith is the pearl of great price.

O what we lose, by standing so far off, by having such *grains* only of this *leavening* faith! Lord spare us yet a little till thy Christ is all formed in our hearts.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Yours affectionately

In Christ Jesus.

SIR,

I have perused your manuscript with great satisfaction, and though I do not recollect ever to have read holiness carried so high, yet notwithstanding that, what you have advanced must be true; seeing you have sufficiently proved your point from scripture and sound reason, and which I think cannot be gainsayed.

I heartily wish I was enabled to set my seal to the truth of it from a real experience on my own heart.

With wishing you such a degree of the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, as will enable you to experience the whole of it, I remain,

Sir,

Your obliged friend,

And humble servant.

PART I.

OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

WHAT IT IS,

*And proved to be attainable before Death, from
Reason and Scripture.*

BY Christian Perfection I would not be understood to mean the absolute Perfection of God, who cannot be less nor more than he is, who existed from all eternity, and is the only independent Being: For in this sense even angels are not perfect, though in another sense they are so; being complete and wanting nothing to answer the great end for which God created them. Neither would I be understood to mean the perfection of angels who are not liable to temptations from the devil, or from a wicked world as we are; nor have a body subject to many infirmities as we have. Neither would I be thought to mean the perfection of Adam in a state of innocence, though when he came out of the hands of God, he was as perfect as angels, being in every respect qualified to answer the end of his

creation as they were. Adam, though he was clothed with clay as well as we, yet till he had sinned, that in no wise clouded his understanding, nor was any impediment to his serving God, as his body was qualified in every respect to help the soul, to answer so glorious an end. Before the body became mortal by the curse, it was not sensible of heat and cold, was a stranger to weariness and a variety of diseases which affect the brain, and in a measure depress the soul, and frequently deprive us of our senses as a burning fever will, by means of all which we are prevented from serving God in the manner we might do were we delivered therefrom, or had not sin put the whole body out of order as well as the soul. By Christian Perfection I then mean neither the absolute Perfection of God, nor the Perfection of angels, nor the Perfection of Adam in his innocent state. Neither do I mean such a Perfection as excludes a growing in grace, whilst we are upon earth: No. For I do not believe there is such a Perfection to be attained even in heaven as to exclude a growing in the knowledge and love of God. For I imagine that angels as well as the spirits of just men made perfect, will be growing to all eternity. To suppose them incapable of growing by reason they can know no more of God, nor love him better than they do, would be to make them as God, who alone cannot know more than he does, nor be greater than he is. And perhaps this will be one part of our happiness in heaven, the having fresh discoveries of God in all his attributes through the endless ages of eternity.

But what I mean by Christian Perfection is the arriving to that degree of faith, or that state of union with Christ wherein all evil tempers, and desires, together with all opposition to the will of God, are done away, and all that is in us becomes holiness unto the Lord; Or it is the loving God with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves according to our present capacity. And to love God with all the heart, &c. implies the loving him with all the powers of the soul, which will put us upon serving him with all the faculties of the body, and must certainly mean a being loose from all creatures, persons and things, and a being so dead to them, as to be ready to sacrifice any or all of them when they stand between God and the soul, or are any hinderance to the loving him more, and serving him better, or would cause us in any wise to sin and grieve his holy Spirit, or prevent our cleaving to him with full purpose of heart, and so hinder his reigning there without a rival. It also implies a depending upon him only, having no confidence in ourselves, persons, nor means, for any spiritual or temporal blessing; nor for deliverance from any spiritual or temporal evil; a looking constantly to God for a continuance of his favour, for a supply of grace, for such temporal things as he sees best, and for deliverance from all that is hurtful to the soul. Thus living by faith, the christian fears nothing, but to offend God, for he knows God is on his side, that his holy angels surround and guard him, and that nothing shall happen to him but what shall be for his good. He

desires nothing but the will of God, for having God and Christ, and all things in them, he has all ~~the~~ wants, and cannot have more than he has already unless it be more of Christ. Thus perfect love casts out all evil fear and desire, making the soul that enjoys it to delight in the whole will of God, in all his ordinances, and providences, and in the cross of Christ; it causes him to be always thinking and speaking of God and of spiritual things, and of other things only as they have a tendency to his glory, for the soul is wrapt up and lost in God and Christ. And as the Christian that is thus devoted to God fears nothing, desires nothing, and is careful for nothing but how he shall please God; so does he *rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks, which is the will of God concerning him.* As this state of perfect love must necessarily include the destruction of self-will, self-seeking, self-righteousness, self-indulgence, self-dependence, and all self-sufficiency, all wrong tempers, unholy desires, vain and sinful thoughts; so does it consequently imply a deep sense of the infinite demerit of sin, a true knowledge of ourselves, of our weakness, ignorance and unworthiness, whereby we are constrained to take nothing to ourselves but shame, and to give all the glory to God through Christ for our salvation, for every blessing both spiritual and temporal, and God becomes all in all. Much more may be deduced from loving God with all the heart, &c. but these few hints may suffice.

To love our neighbour as ourselves, implies a doing unto all men as we would they should

do unto us; and a copying after Christ in laying out ourselves for the good of others, and seeking occasions to benefit our neighbour to the utmost of our power according to the light we have in the will of God herein. This love makes us to believe the best of all, to put the most favourable construction upon their words and actions that we possibly can; and when we are obliged to condemn the conduct of any, it suffers us not to judge the person, but inclines us to hope the best and to cover the sin, being unwilling to disclose the faults of another unless good may proceed therefrom, or evil be prevented. It also suffers long, bears, forbears, forgives, behaves itself not unseemly, is not puffed up; sets us not above others, but lays us at the feet of all men, and is kind, meek, gentle, and easy to be intreated. It bears reproaches, contradiction, oppositions, and contempt with cheerfulness; it suffers others to dissent from us in opinion, will think and let think, and believes that others may be right, and that we ourselves may be mistaken: though with respect to essentials we are well grounded and immoveable, being assured of their certainty from experience as well as from scripture. This is what I call Christian Perfection, and what I think is implied in loving God with all the heart and our neighbour as ourselves, or is included in being *cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, and the having of a *heart of flesh, a new and clean heart*. Which, O my God, be pleased to give to me.

Or I take Christian Perfection to be, what a late friend of mine who is now in glory, has described it. "A man subjecting himself

“ to the grace of God, and ceasing from all
 “ things that may obstruct the operation of
 “ his Spirit. We are commanded to *cleanse*
 “ *ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.*
 “ Now by the filthiness of the flesh is meant
 “ all those evils which proceed from the heart,
 “ and defile the man, Matt. xv. 19, 20.
 “ By the filthiness of the spirit, that corrupt
 “ fountain from whence they flow. So that he
 “ who is thus perfect, has, as our Lord’s ex-
 “ pression is, made the tree good, and his fruit
 “ is good also.

“ The loving of God supremely, and the
 “ exercising of that love, in a continual act,
 “ as freely, and yet as necessarily as we breathe,
 “ or in other words, the loving of God with
 “ all the heart, &c. is that, in which the very
 “ essence of holiness consists. The nearer ap-
 “ proaches we make to God, the more we
 “ receive of this image of God. And he is
 “ fully restored to that image, who is admitted
 “ into the most intimate communion with God.
 “ We cannot conceive of this communion in
 “ an higher degree than what our Lord has
 “ promised to this love. John xiv. 21. *He that*
 “ *loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I*
 “ *will love him, and manifest myself to him :*
 “ And, ver. 23. *If a man love me, my Father*
 “ *will love him, and we will come unto him and*
 “ *make our abode with him.* This love being
 “ Christian Perfection.

“ It then follows, that there is no such Per-
 “ fection attainable in this life, as implies en-
 “ tire deliverance from mistakes in judgment,
 “ provided these do not proceed from any

“ wrong temper or disposition of soul. That
 “ a perfect freedom from mistake, or errors,
 “ is not necessary to Christian Perfection, is
 “ evident, because with respect to this, all
 “ men are on an equal footing. An illiterate
 “ man, who is utterly unacquainted with all
 “ those rules of judgment and reasoning, which
 “ might in a great measure keep him from
 “ mistakes, is just as capable of loving God
 “ with all his heart, as one of the most pro-
 “ found learning. As a man may hold many
 “ right opinions, and yet have no degree of
 “ the moral image of God; so many may be
 “ fully restored to that image, and yet retain
 “ many opinions that are wrong. For as no
 “ man is the better for holding right opinions,
 “ any farther than as they influence him to a
 “ right conduct; so no man is the worse for
 “ holding wrong opinions, any farther than as
 “ they are the occasion of sin, and touch the
 “ fundamentals.

“ That we may be delivered from sin, and
 “ ought to be, I argue, first, from Christ's com-
 “ ing into the world. If for this very purpose
 “ the Son of God was manifested, *that he might*
 “ *save his people* from their sins, then it is cer-
 “ tain they may be saved. That this was the
 “ end of his coming into the world, appears
 “ from the following scriptures. Eph. v. 25—
 “ 27: *Christ loved his church, and gave himself*
 “ *for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with*
 “ *the washing of water, by the word: That he*
 “ *might present it to himself, a glorious church not*
 “ *having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but*
 “ *that it should be holy and without blemish.* Gal.
 “ i. 4: *Who gave himself for our sins, that he*

“ might deliver us from the present evil world;
 “ according to the will of God, and our Father.
 “ 1 John iii. 8. For this purpose the Son of God
 “ was manifest, that he might destroy the works of
 “ the devil.—Secondly, I argue from the end
 “ of the gospel ministry. If Christ preached
 “ himself, and appointed others to the work
 “ of the ministry, for this very end, The Per-
 “ fection of his Saints, then it is certain that
 “ such a state, as has been described, is attain-
 “ able. Eph. iv. 11—13. He gave some apostles,
 “ some pastors, some teachers, for the perfecting of
 “ the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the
 “ edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in
 “ the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of
 “ the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the
 “ measure of the fulness of the stature of Christ.
 “ Col. i. 8. Whom we preach, warning every
 “ man, and teaching every man in all wisdom,
 “ that we may present every man perfect in Christ
 “ Jesus. Thirdly, I argue from the apostle’s
 “ exhortation. Wherefore, beloved, seeing you
 “ look for such things, be diligent, that you may
 “ be found of him in peace, without spot and
 “ blameless. Fourthly, I argue from the pro-
 “ mises,” of which there are multitudes ; but
 many of them being already mentioned, I shall
 omit setting any down here. “ Fifthly, I argue
 “ from the prayers of the apostles, Eph. iii.
 “ 17, 18. That Christ may dwell in your hearts
 “ by faith ; that ye being rooted and grounded in
 “ love, may be able to comprehend with all saints,
 “ what is the breadth and length, and depth, and
 “ height ; and to know the love of Christ, which
 “ passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with
 “ all the fulness of God. 1 Theſſ. iii. 12. 13.
 The Lord make you to increase and abound in love

“ one towards another, and towards all men, as
 “ we do towards you. To the end he may stablish
 “ your hearts unblameable in holiness before God,
 “ even our Father. 1 Pet. v. 10. But the God
 “ of all grace, which has called us to his eternal
 “ glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered
 “ awhile make you perfect, stablish, strengthen,
 “ and settle you. From all which it is plain
 that the apostles believed “ such a state as I
 “ have been describing to be attainable; and
 “ therefore on their authority I believe so too.”

“ To conclude, If there is any good ground
 “ for us to believe the above state attainable,
 “ and that God is willing to effect it, then we
 “ ought to desire it, pray for, labour after, and
 “ expect it. Not to do so, must be the greatest
 “ folly, and the highest ingratitude.”

Now to prove this Perfection attainable from
 reason, and more fully from scripture, is the
 next thing I have to do. But as the dispute
 is not about the necessity of being thus cleansed
 and made holy, in order to be meet for glory,
 but whether we can be so before the article of
 death, I shall only introduce those reasons and
 scriptures, which may prove that such a state
 is attainable before then.

First from Reason. 1. Every command of
 a superior requires immediate compliance there-
 to, unless some other time is fixed; but there
 is no time fixed when we should love God
 with all our heart, and our neighbour as our-
 selves, therefore we must conclude that now, the
 present moment is the time. But did I say
 no time is fixed? Surely there is, for God has
 said *to-day*, and again, *now is the accepted time*,

now is the day of salvation. 2. The very nature of the command itself, as well as its being much enforced and set forth in a variety of forms, as also the reasonableness of it, and the great obligation we are under thus to love God, shew that the duty is not to be deferred to a dying moment; especially as the word of God puts it not off till then, but continually upbraids us with our unbelief and littleness of faith. 3. Surely all the promises concerning holiness, which is our qualification for heaven, and those commands of *cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, of purifying ourselves even as he is pure, and of rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks, and doing the will of God upon earth, as it is done in heaven,* and all others of the like kind must relate to this life; but if our breath and corruption so leave us together, that the one departs not before the other, then those promises and commandments do not relate to this life, but to eternity, seeing *those* are not to be fulfilled till death, and consequently *these* cannot be complied with before it, and we must die before we can love God with all our heart, &c. and our neighbour as ourselves, and rejoice evermore, and pray without ceasing. But I thought when this life was ended, there would be an end of all prayer. And if we cannot rejoice evermore here, what need is there of the commandment? For certainly there will be nothing in glory to prevent our rejoicing evermore there. All the commandments then of the like kind if they concern us not till the article of death are quite needless; for if we die happy, we all know, we shall have nothing to oppose our

rejoicing evermore, and loving God with all our heart in heaven. How absurd is this! we must die in order to have the promises relating to this life fulfilled; which cannot be before, if sin is not destroyed before the body dies; unless it can be proved that those commands and promises which have just been mentioned relate to eternity, and not to this life; which I think no one will attempt to prove. But more of this, when I come to prove the doctrine more fully from scripture. 4. As God designs we should glorify him upon earth, we should certainly do it better with the heart wholly cleansed from sin, and given up to him than we can with the remains of sin in it. Christ being not only a prophet to teach, a priest to reconcile God and sinners together, but a King also to reign, and *save to the uttermost all who come to God through him. He will thrust out the enemy from before them, and will say, Destroy them,* Deut. xxxiii. 27. 5, and lastly. Every believer groaning under the weight of in-dwelling sin, panting for full liberty to love God with all the heart, and longing for full conformity to his blessed will in all things, must have this groaning, panting, longing from the Spirit of God which is in him, and shall not God hearken to his own blessed Spirit? Shall he create a thirst which he will not satisfy? Shall he create a cry which he will not answer? Shall he give desires which he will not fulfil? So far from it, he says, Psal. lxxxix. 10. *that he will fulfil the desires of them that fear him.* And he assures us, *that he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,* Eph. iii. 20. Shall he give his child to see and feel the evil of sin, to

make him groan under it, and will he not deliver therefrom? Shall he shew him his privilege, or at least the beauty of such a state, and not give him to enjoy the same? Shew him the promises, and not accomplish them in him? Shall God so mock his child? Man may do it, but God cannot. *Men will not believe, therefore they are not established.*

Still Secondly, from scripture likewise, this state appears to be attainable. The apostle Paul by the Holy Ghost commands us to rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, in every thing give thanks. Now how shall this command be complied with, if sin is not destroyed before the article of death? No man can do it in his life time, because of the remains of sin that is in him, and no man can do it ~~when~~ sin is destroyed. To whom then is the command given, and by whom shall it be obeyed? As I read of no commandments given to departed spirits, I presume all the commandments in the Bible belong to the living. To the dead they cannot for the above reason, and because in eternity there will be no need of prayer. And though there the spirits of just men made perfect will be always praising God, yet they will not be thanking him for present sufferings and temporal blessings, which seem to be implied in *giving thanks to God in every thing*; for they will then have done with them all.

It will make nothing against this argument, that some believe we may be delivered from sin a few minutes, or hours before we die, though not weeks, nor months, nor years, and therefore the command may still be complied with,

and power be given to *rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks*, before we die. It is plain that this must be quite foreign to the Spirit's meaning, for these words seem to be opposed to all the trials and temptations which may come upon us from the world, the devil and an afflicted body. As if the apostle had said, Not only rejoice when you meet with no opposition, but *rejoice also in the midst of tribulation, and count it all joy that you are tempted*, because an opportunity is now given you of bringing great glory to God, and of advancing yourselves in holiness; and this do, not only sometimes, but always, evermore. Be always in prayer, for you will be surrounded with enemies as long as you are in the world, and will be always wanting heavenly wisdom, and divine assistance. And to be always in prayer, is to be ever putting forth all kinds of desires unto God, that are suited to our condition, according to his will; to be continually looking up to Jesus, to depend wholly upon him, to expect constant supplies of grace from him sufficient for every trial, and for the performing of every duty, to do nothing without him, to leave every thing to him, and to commit ourselves wholly to him, and this not only now and then, but at all times, without ceasing. Be thankful in every thing. Give thanks for adversity, as well as for prosperity, for evil as well as for good report, for pain, as well as for ease, for sickness, as well as for health, for the loss of goods, as well as for the increase of substance, for the death, as well as for the life of friends, for enemies, and for temptations from the devil, as well as for free-

dom therefrom. Give thanks not only for what is naturally pleasing to us, but for what is also grievous to carnal men ; be thankful that the will of God is accomplished. For he that is fully conformed thereto, will be sensible that his will is always best ; if so, it is matter of thankfulness that what is, is either permitted or ordered by unerring wisdom, therefore in every thing give thanks, and not only do so now and then, but at all times, upon every occasion. And what is it that keeps us from being thankful, but the not seeing ~~of~~ God in every thing ; not duly considering that all things are ordered or permitted by him, and therefore not submitting to his providence, finding fault with this or the other thing, and directing what ought and what ought not to be. For these reasons we cannot in every thing give thanks ; for who can be thankful for what crosses him, if he does not cheerfully submit to what God in his wisdom sees fit to permit or order ? Let the will of God be always our choice, and let us have none but what is regulated by his, then all things will be right, and we shall be thankful for every thing. *The pure in heart see God* in all things, therefore in every thing they give thanks. While Job saw God in all his losses of goods and children, he could praise God ; but afterwards losing that sight of God which he had at first, he lost patience : Now what he did at one time, we are commanded to do always. If after all it should be said, all this may be done, though sin remains in the heart, I deny it ; as well as that any man can love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself, whilst there is the remains of sin in him. The thing is so plain, that it

needs no other proof than appealing to every believer's conscience, whether sin, when stirring and rising up in the heart, though it should be kept under, is not an interruption to joy, prayer and thankfulness, and whether it does not frequently put us off our guard, and in spite of all our efforts prevent our being engaged in those duties agreeable to the injunction.

Zacharias being filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied, *That we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve God without fear, in holiness* (implying an inward conformity to the divine image;) *and righteousness* (implying an outward conformity to the divine will,) *all the days of our life.* The latter clause certainly puts the question out of all dispute, *all the days of our life*: Not in the article of death, when it will be out of our power thus to serve him: But in our life, whilst we have health and strength. And our Saviour teaches us thus to pray, *Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.* And how is it done there? Why in every particular, with constancy and cheerfulness without any mixture of impatience, discontent or unholy dispositions. Can it be supposed when we make this prayer agreeable to his own instruction, that our Lord would not have us to expect the power to do his will, till our breath leave us, when we cannot possibly do his will upon earth as it is done in heaven, can we imagine that he commands us to pray for what he designs we should never perform?

We read also that *He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.* Tit. ii. 14. Here we see the reason why he re-

deems us from all iniquity, &c. That we might be zealous of good works. What! To be zealous of good works, when we come to die, in the article of death, when we can no longer work neither here, nor in the grave. Certainly it cannot be then, but when we are in a capacity of working, even in the time of health. And St. John tells us, that *God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. Faithful and just to forgive us our sins! Why? What obligation is he under to forgive us, who *are by nature children of wrath*, and more so by wicked works? All that he has to bind or oblige him thereto is his own promises; and now the word is gone out of his mouth, he cannot reject any that come to him through his Son, whom he has given for the sins of the whole world, because he is a promise-keeping God. But is this forgiveness to be experienced in life? or a few moments, or hours before death, or longer? The apostle mentions nothing at all of the precise time, but the general tenor of scripture is this, He that believeth shall be saved, and many who have simply relied upon the merits of Christ, have proved him faithful in forgiving them instantly, and have lived twenty, thirty, or forty years after. Will not the same argument then hold good in the other case? Certainly it will. Let us try. Is he faithful and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness? Why? What obligation is he under? Or what has he to bind him? Our merits, or our faithfulness? No. Nothing of all this, but his own promises which he has again and again made that he will do it, if we will but seek the blessing according to his will. For

what he has promised, his faithfulness binds him to fulfil. But when will he do it? In the article of death, or a little before, or some time before we die? The scriptures herein are silent, and leave us to the use of our reason, which ought to dictate to us, that as God has commanded us to love him with all our heart, and has promised to circumcise it that we may, and being under the greatest obligations so to do, we ought not to defer it, but to seek and expect the power till we receive it. God being willing to justify a sinner long before death, by parity of reason, he is willing to *cleanse* the believer from *all filthiness of flesh and spirit* long before death; for the promises relating to both are of the same tenor. We find no distinction in the bible that God has made between justification and sanctification in respect of time. He does not say, that the one may be at any time, but the other not till a little before death. Do we not then dishonour God, to imagine that he will be faithful long before death to justify a sinner who diligently seeks him; for we make him to mock his children by enabling them to abhor even a sinful thought, by creating within them unutterable groans and strong cries day and night for deliverance from inbred sin, and giving them great and precious promises, whereby they might be encouraged to seek and expect deliverance every moment, when, after all, he will not deliver them till death. The apostle therefore to vindicate God tells us, That *he is faithful and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*, as well as *to forgive us our sins*. Surely if he had proved himself faithful in doing the one, he will be faithful to do the other also, if we seek the one as diligently

as we fought the other. If any should say, to cleanse from all unrighteousness, does not mean the destruction of all sin, I would ask, what does it mean? The word unrighteousness here in the text, if it has any meaning at all, must imply inward as well as outward sin, whatever it may do elsewhere. Therefore to be cleansed from all unrighteousness is to be delivered from all unholy tempers, desires, thoughts; to have them utterly destroyed, to have their memory perish, so as to feel them no more.

But some may say, We see no witnesses of this, none who are thus cleansed, therefore we cannot believe the doctrine of entire sanctification; but we see witnesses of justification, people who know their sins forgiven, therefore we can believe the doctrine of present pardon or justification. This is nothing to the purpose. For in fact the truth is, they believe the doctrine of the one, therefore they believe there are witnesses of it; they deny the doctrine of the other, therefore they believe there are no witnesses thereof. Some again believe nothing of justification, and therefore deny there are any who know their sins forgiven; but is this any proof against the doctrine? Yes, if the former proves any thing against the doctrine of entire sanctification, for the one proves just as much as the other, and no more. Therefore if this manner of proving the truth is to be allowed in the one case, it should be allowed in the other also, and then we must come to this unhappy conclusion, that neither the one nor the other is to be experienced in this life. But to the law and the testimony, for the most prudent way is to be determined by them, and not

by men's experience, nor by what they believe. St. Paul, in praying for the Thessalonians, says ; *The very God of peace sanctify you wholly : And I pray God your whole spirit, and soul and body be preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.* Can any scripture or words express a deliverance from sin in a stronger manner ? And can any thing be plainer than the promise annexed ? *He will do it.* But when ? In the article of death ? or just a few minutes, or hours before we die ? There is not the least intimation of death in the whole sentence. Is it possible that these words should be intended for the dying ? Surely reason dictates they are not to be so understood. Who does not believe, if he dies with his spirit, soul and body wholly sanctified, that he shall be preserved blameless to the day of judgment ? As death puts a period to every thing relating to time, every promise concerning holiness, which is our qualification for glory, is no more to be deferred till death, than our justification should be put off till then ; and there is just the same grounds in scripture to defer the one as the other to that period. All God's commandments relate to our state of probation, and afterwards we shall be condemned or acquitted, as we have conformed or lived agreeable thereto ; therefore no commandment in the bible can concern us in the article of death ; for in that instant our probation ends, and we are no longer in a capacity of obeying or disobeying those commands which relate to this life. To make all the commandmen's referring to the *purifying ourselves even as God is pure ;* and all the sanctifying promises to relate to the

article of death, is to make God give very strange commands, and odd kind of promises. It is to make him say something, and to mean nothing. And though God may not deliver all his children from sin till the last moment, yet it is plain none of the commandments can refer to that period, any more than the command of believing, and the promises of justification refer to the last moment, because some are not justified till then. *Q that my people had hearkened unto me (saith the Lord) and Israel had walked in my ways ! I should soon have subdued their enemies.* Psal. lxxx. 13, 14. Here is the reason why his people are not delivered from their enemies, all inward sin ; they will not believe him. *Ask, faith Christ, that your joy may be full.* What, that our joy may be full, when we come to die? No surely. But ask that it may be full now, for certainly it will be full after death, if we go to glory. And certainly the words must imply a deliverance from sin, for joy cannot be said to be full, whilst sin is mixed with it, or sin remains in the heart. So our Lord, after telling us of the importunate widow's success with the unjust judge, draws this inference, *And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night to him ? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.* Not when they are about dying, but *speedily*. How strong and encouraging are these words ?

If the above scriptures will not prove a deliverance from sin before death, I think, none will, therefore I shall produce no more ; but conclude by shewing, that some the apostles wrote to, must have attained, unless we make those scriptures, which shall be now considered,

to have no meaning, or the different states of christians which the apostles make, to be one and the same. St. John wrote to little children, young men and fathers. Unless fathers were such as had attained, what distinction shall be made between children and young men, and between these and fathers? True St. Paul says, I count not myself to have apprehended, (surely not meaning that he had not received the perfect love of God, which casts out all fear, but that he had not received all that measure of grace he saw was for him before his departure; or having an eye to his martyrdom, and the day of the resurrection, he could not count himself to have attained till then, being athirst to die for his Lord, and to rise bodily as well as spiritually after his likeness. Therefore these words may be very consistent with the following, and in no wise prove, that neither he, nor any of those to whom he wrote, were not delivered from sin.)

Therefore let us, as many as be perfect, be thus minded, still to press forward after degrees of holiness, for there is much more for us than we have yet received. And we may suppose that St. John and many more were partakers of this holiness which we have been describing, when he wrote his first Epistle ch. iv. 17. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world.

What Christ tells us concerning the corn, that when it is ripe, the sickle is thrust in, and it is cut down, does not at all prove any thing against our being delivered from sin long before death, unless we maintained, there was no growth afterwards, which we do not. So far from prov-

ing any thing against the doctrine which had been advanced, I think, it will sufficiently evince the truth of the same. Our Lord speaks thus concerning it: *The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.* Observe these words. But when the fruit is ripe. It is plain the fruit is not ripe so soon as the field is weeded, and the corn is full in the ear, and it is not cut down when it is full, but when it is ripe. So a believer may be delivered from all sin, be full of love, of God and of Christ, and yet not ripe for glory; for the Lord might have much for him to do and to suffer, after his being delivered from inbred sin, being now in a capacity of suffering with cheerfulness, and of doing his will diligently, and both with steadiness, and hereby bringing great glory to God. A soul then is ripe for glory, when the whole will of God is accomplished in him, by him, and upon him. Some indeed whom the Lord might deliver from all sin may not be called to do nor to suffer afterwards, therefore having nothing more to do or to suffer, are ripe as soon as sin is destroyed, and their souls filled with love. And perhaps when God delivers his children from sin long before death, he gives them not so large a measure of his Spirit, nor such a degree of grace, as he bestows instantly upon those whom he takes immediately to himself, after delivering them from all inbred sin, leaving the other to grow till they receive such a measure of his Spirit and degree of holiness, as shall be their fitness for glory. That measure of his Spirit

and degree of holiness which may be the fitness of one, may not be the fitness of another, for as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also will saints differ at the resurrection.

It is strange to imagine, that as soon as we are able to serve God steadily, to love him constantly, to be uniform in all things, to bring most glory to him, and to his Son Jesus Christ, we must be cut down that instant. Strange! That we should make, as it were, a great blaze, and in a moment put it out, before the light can come to others, that they may see our good works, and thereby be constrained to glorify our Father which is in heaven. Surely the Lord will not light a candle, to put it under a bushel. To make all the texts which I have quoted, and many more to refer to the article of death, is to make God speak in a very odd manner, and to mean something beside what he says, and something quite foreign to the notion he has given us of our duty to him, and the desires he has created in the hearts of his children. As I see in the bible the commandments simply laid down with the promises annexed, and I read nothing about the article of death, I will, by the grace of God, regard not the words of man, but simply adhere to the word of God. And should I be mistaken, I shall act more consistently in believing that I shall receive that which I pray for, than those do who pray for what they believe they never shall enjoy till after death. And the more I press after the perfect love of God, though I should miss of it, yet it seems to me I shall grow more holy, and be more happy in believing my desires shall be fulfilled, and my labour shall not be in vain, than those will be who,

though they may pray for it, do not press after it, nor believe their desires shall be accomplished. And I imagine it can be nothing less than sin to pray that God would do that for me (as perhaps there is not a believer but prays that God would cleanse him from all sin, and give him to love him with all his heart, that he might serve him more perfectly the residue of his life) which I suppose he never will, as not believing it agreeable to his will thus to cleanse me, and circumcise my heart, that I might serve him in holiness and righteousness all the rest of my days. Surely this is not praying with the understanding, any more than it is praying in faith.

Having endeavoured to shew what Christian Perfection is, and to prove that it is attainable long before death, it only remains that I should now endeavour to shew in what manner it is to be attained. The believer that would arrive at it must be thoroughly awakened to a deep feeling sense of the want of it, in order to go on steadily in the way of obedience, and to rejoice always. He must also see the danger he is exposed to of making shipwreck of faith, whilst there is in him *an evil heart of unbelief*, which would continually make him to *depart from the living God*. He must take care that he lays no other foundation than that which is already laid, the Lord Jesus Christ: through whom, and by faith in whose blood he continues in the favour of God, and *not by works of righteousness that he has done*. As at first, by faith, and not by the deeds of the law, he was justified; so by faith, and not by the deeds of the law, he continues in a justified state. And as pardon is God's free gift, he must see that

holiness is also; that God sanctifies as freely as he justifies; and that therefore by the deeds of the law, he can no more merit the perfect love of God, than he could before justification by his good works, merit that degree of love which he received when he was first justified. He must be sensible of the purity of God's nature, and of his law, as also of his own depravity, so as to constrain him to cry out, I am all unclean, thy purity I want; which purity he must seek with his whole heart. He should believe, that if he perseveres in seeking, and will not rest without it, he shall surely obtain it. But then he must know that he must seek it; by denying himself, taking up his cross, watching, praying, fighting, endeavouring to be found in every duty, and feeling that after all he is but an *unprofitable servant*. His dependance must be upon the faithfulness of him, who has promised *to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*, and not upon the means he uses, or any thing he does or has done. Sin being his burden, which he truly hates, and a full conformity to God in all things, his desire, his unfaithfulness and unworthiness should not discourage him; for he ought to be sensible that he will never be worthy, and that he is never likely to be faithful, whilst his heart remains deceitful, which it will be, whilst sin or unbelief is in it. Therefore he should eye the *promises* whereby he might *partake of the divine nature*, and look upon himself as the object to whom they belong, as not being made to the pure in heart, but to those who desire to be so. The language then of his heart should be: though I am not worthy, and can do nothing to deserve a deli-

verance from sin, yet my unworthiness shall not keep me from it, for he who has called me to be sanctified wholly, spirit, soul and body, is faithful, and he will do it. 1 Thess. v. 23. 24. The Lord has promised to *circumcise my heart, that I may love him with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength.* Deut. xxx. 6. *To thrust out all my enemies, and destroy them.* Deut. xxxiii. 27. *To sprinkle clean water upon me, that I may be clean from all my filthiness, and from all my idols to cleanse me. A new heart also to give me, and to take away the stony heart out of my flesh, and to give me an heart of flesh. And to put his spirit within me, and to cause me to walk in his statutes, and to keep his judgments, and do them.* Ezekiel xxxvi. 25—27. And as thou, O Lord, art not as man that thou shouldest lie, I believe thou wilt do even as thou hast said. A belief hereof will make him to seek, and expect the renewal of his soul in righteousness, in spite of all oppositions. Yea, though the Lord proves him for a while by dryness in prayer, deadness in every ordinance; lays open to his view all the evil of his heart, and permits the enemy to come in as a flood, yet will he say, *He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.* These temptations being intended for his good, if he will exercise faith, instead of giving place to evil-reasoning, murmuring, and impatience, his soul shall be brought nearer to God thereby. The Lord first proves us various ways, before he gives us the blessing. He will delay the fulfilment of his promises for a season to try our faith, to prove whether we will continue to seek till he find, and patiently wait his time, and simply rely upon his faithfulness to do as

he has promised, in spight of our unworthiness and corruption, his delays, and all oppositions whatever. So he tried the children of Israel whom he intended to bring into the good land, but because they grew impatient, and gave way to unbelief and murmuring, *He swore in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest.* Let him therefore that would enter into that rest, where God is loved alone, and all is joy and peace, take heed he does not fall short of it after their example, and charge God foolishly; but rather let him be discouraged by nothing, not even by his falls, knowing that a full conformity to God in all things is the very desire of his soul, and to please him the only thing he would aim at. But let him act faith upon Jesus Christ, the goodness of God, and his promises, by means of which his faith shall be increased, he shall receive more strength, and light, and the promises shall be surely accomplished in due season. No child of God that desires to be delivered from inbred sin, should look to his unworthiness, to the length of time he has been justified, to his faithfulness and steadiness since he has been pardoned, to his sufferings; neither to this nor to the other believer who is not yet delivered from his evil heart; but to Christ *sitting upon his throne, and creating all things new*, considering whether he now thirsts, and uses the means, and to the promises relating to such an one, and to such a condition. One of which promises is this, *Let him that is athirst come*, in the present tense. Come now, come whilst he is athirst, come as soon as he is athirst, not when his thirst is gone, for then he will not come, beside there is no promise for any who is not athirst.

Agreeable to this is that other text, *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.* And though the Lord should with-hold the blessing for a season to try his faith and patience, let him continue seeking and trusting in the Lord, and expecting it every moment. He should be entirely resigned to the will of God, leaving the time and manner to him when and how to bestow it, only he must obstinately persist in seeking and expecting, because he who has promised cannot lie; and nothing pleases God more than such a well-grounded confidence in him as is not to be shaken upon any account. No; though he should seemingly deny to satisfy his desires, and should deal with him as with the Syrophenician woman, whose faith he so much applauded; and as God is true, he will meet with her success, for he shall be delivered, and that ere long. For his encouragement he has these scriptures. *O that my people had hearkened to me, (that is, believed me) and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies.* Mark that word, *Soon.* And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night to him? I tell you that he will avenge them *speedily.* Observe that word also, *Speedily.* Reader, may the Lord impress it upon thy heart; that if thou art sincerely seeking the blessing, he may *speedily avenge thee.*—If any man should ask whether the destruction of sin is gradual or instantaneous, I answer it is both. And so is justification. The one is as the other. A sinner is first convinced of sin, then of unbelief, afterwards of his own righteousness being but as filthy rags, and by continuing in the means of grace, grows in the

knowledge of himself, sin, and the nature of faith, and some weeks, months, or years after, is justified. And though this may not be the experience of all, yet it is of many. Some perhaps may be convinced at one and the same time of sin, unbelief, and the insufficiency of their own righteousness to merit God's favour; yet they grow in this knowledge, and receive more and more power accordingly to forsake sin, renounce themselves, and see the great need they have of Christ; and after a while they are set at liberty. In both cases, though in the above instances the work is gradual, yet, the removal of guilt, or the act of justifying, is instantaneous. In like manner, a believer denies himself, mortifies the deeds of the body, strives to suffer, and to do all the will of God, endeavours to have a watchful spirit, and to keep under all his corruptions, that they might in no wise have power over him; but, after all, finding he is often taken off his guard, by means of which he is frequently overcome by impatience, pride, foolish desires, vain thoughts; and sometimes led to murmur at providence; yea, to neglect duties, to grow weary of ordinances, to be cold, dead, and wandering in the use of them; and to give place to lightness, unprofitable talk, and unnecessarily speaking of the faults of others, he is more convinced of the sinfulness of sin, the deceitfulness of his own heart, and the preciousness of Christ; whereby he sees that every moment he needs the merit of his death, and his constant teaching; but more especially that he wants him as a king, to destroy all his enemies. By means of this great opposition which sin makes, he

is made very sensible of the absolute necessity there is of having it totally taken away, root and branch, and therefore strives against it with all his might ; though the more he is determined to have it destroyed, the more it opposes ; and the believer that is thus struggling for mastery, feels the power and strength of it perhaps in a greater degree than another, who is not like-minded. It is probable when the struggle is at the height, the believer fighting against it, as it were foot to foot, he never felt sin so strong and powerful as now ; and he may be so put to it, as to think he must yield, and can hold out no more. Then it is that Christ, the captain of his salvation, steps forth, and slays it with the brightness of his coming ; then in an instant the opposition ends, the carnal mind vanishes away, and the soul is set at full liberty. Nevertheless after this, there is a constant growing, and receiving more and more of the image of God, till we are ripe for glory, the corn being now but just full in the ear. And this deliverance from sin, as well as the deliverance from guilt, may be within a few weeks, or months after we begin to seek it as we ought. For we do not read in the bible that we must seek it, so long a time at least, before we should expect to receive it ; or that a sinner has greater encouragement to expect pardon much sooner after he begins to seek it in good earnest, than a believer to expect freedom from inbred sin, when he seeks it with his whole heart. To me it appears, that the scriptures give the same encouragement to the one as to the other. Why so few attain to a liberty from sin, and so many experience the

forgiveness of their sins, a good reason may be assigned. Many believe and seek the one; but few believe and seek the other.

That the destruction of sin is instantaneous, is evident, because the rooting of it out, or making a full end of it, depends not at all upon works, nor upon our faithfulness, any more than justification depends thereon, but entirely upon our believing God that he will do as he has promised, and upon his faithfulness to accomplish what he has engaged to do, upon condition of our believing. If it should be said, there is a difference between a seeker and a believer, and that more is required of the one than of the other; I deny it absolutely with respect to meriting any thing. If means are to be used by the one, so are they to be used by the other; and as the one should, so ought the other to look through them to Christ. What the one should expect from them, the other ought, and no more. The believer has no more to bring, than the sinner, and can receive nothing from God but by faith; being sanctified as well as justified thereby, Acts xxvi. 18. By faith we obtain promises, Heb. xi. 33.

It is with sin, as it is with a tree. You may lop it, but the branches will grow again; take it up by the roots, and the memory of it shall perish. You may imagine a particular sin is destroyed, and aim at the destruction of another; but because the root remains, you shall find, when a proper occasion offers, that that sin, though apparently dead, shall rise again, and attack you with more violence than ever.

And because you thought it dead, you will be in greater danger of being overcome by it; and this may be the case, after it has been asleep for years. To aim at the destruction of any one sin, without laying the axe to the root, is like rocking a child to sleep, whom you may quiet for the present, but he will awake by and by, and give you as much if not more trouble than ever. To strive to have the heart cleansed from all corruption, by destroying one sin after another, is never the way to cleanse it, for who knows the thousandth part of his sins? And if any had a thorough knowledge of all the branches springing from the root of sin, he would require an eternity to purify his heart in, seeing he is so long before he can apparently accomplish the destruction of one; and, after flattering himself for a season, that he has entirely conquered it, he is again as violently assaulted by the same, as if it was the only sin now remaining, and all the rest were totally destroyed, though perhaps a host of them, after a while, shall attack him all together, and drive him to his wit's end. The destruction of sin being an act of omnipotency, is *not* effected by *might*, nor by *power*, but by *my Spirit*, saith the Lord. It is destroyed at a stroke, when the Lord lays to his hand; dries up the fountain, and unites us wholly to himself. However, if we desire deliverance, we must use the means; but we must expect no more from them, than the Israelites expected from the blowing of rams horns; yet, had they not performed that command, God would not have thrown down the walls of Jericho, being not bound by his promise to do it, but upon their following his directions. So

only the mighty power of God can throw down the walls of indwelling sin in our hearts; and he will not do it, but in the use of the means he has ordained. From what has been said it appears to me, that I have advanced nothing but what is altogether scriptural, and agreeable to sound experience; sanctification must be acknowledged to be a progressive work, and the destruction of sin an instantaneous act.

PART. II.

AS saving or living faith is little understood, and made to mean something else than what it really is; I purpose in the following discourse, to treat of it in the sense it bears in the word of God, which is nothing less than an union with Jesus Christ. Saving faith, or union with Christ, are only different expressions, meaning the same thing. Faith, I know, in scripture has various acceptations; as the believing of what is therein recorded, a power to work miracles, and a firm reliance upon God when we draw near to him in any ordinance, *for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him.* But relying upon God, or trusting in him, or a strong persuasion that he will shew mercy, only delivers the soul from guilt, as it unites the soul and Christ together, and is no farther saving than as it is a mean which God

makes use of to effect this union; for we are not justified out of, but in Christ. This is plain. For as soon as we are sensible of our justification, we are sensible of our new inward creation; that is, of a change of heart, and certainly that change can be only derived from union with the Lord of life and glory, and not separate from him. Therefore that which is the cause of the one, must be the cause of the other also. Unless it is by this union we are justified, faith will be a work, so that we shall then get to the law for justification. We know some have had a firm reliance upon God for a considerable time before they have received a sense of pardon, and power to rejoice, and bring forth the fruits of holiness; therefore this can be nothing more than a faith to be healed, and saving or living faith can be nothing less than union with Christ, for *Christ is our life*, St. Paul and St. John both tell us so. And as depending upon God's faithfulness to fulfil his justifying promises, and relying upon the satisfaction made by Christ for sin, effect this union, which immediately gives a sense of pardon, and a new heart; so afterwards depending upon the faithfulness of God to fulfil all his sanctifying promises, and a hearty embracing of Christ as our sanctification and redemption, as well as wisdom and righteousness, the union increases, and as it increases, the soul is more and more transformed into the image of God. Living faith then implies the conjunction of Christ and a sincere penitent, whereby the creature, though by nature a child of wrath, is now made a child of God. Ye are the children of God, saith St. Paul, by faith in Christ Jesus. It would be ab-

furd to suppose any a child of God, and not
 united to him. And that St. Paul means by
 faith union with Christ, is plain; for in another
 place he says, *There is now therefore no condemna-*
tion to them who are in Christ Jesus. So we see,
 with the apostle, *believing and being in Christ* are
 synonymous. In the Epistle to the Hebrews,
 we read, *Faith is the substance, or subsistence, of*
things hoped for; and what can that be? But
Christ in us the hope of glory. Christ tells us,
 that every one *who believeth on him hath everlasting*
life. And in another place to Martha he
 says, *I am the resurrection and the life.* By these
 scriptures we see, we have life only by virtue of
 this conjunction, as the branch has life from its
 union with the vine. Hence we also learn, that
 eternal life commences as soon as we are united
 to Christ. He that believeth *hath* life, as natu-
 rally as a branch in a vine has it. It is not said,
 shall have it; for as soon as the union is, this
 life begins. Therefore it is that faith works by
 love, because it is union with the God of love.
 To talk of being justified first, and then united
 to Christ, is unscriptural; for we are not justi-
 fied out of, but in Christ, as I have already
 observed.

In order to the being reconciled to God, no-
 thing is required, St. Paul tells us, but believ-
 ing; for *to him that worketh not, but believeth on*
him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted
for righteousness. Many good reasons may be
 assigned why we cannot be justified by works,
 but I shall for brevity's sake mention only one.
 Had justification been by the deeds of the law,
 no flesh could be saved; for till we are freely

justified, we can do no good works, can bring forth no fruit unto holiness. The reason appears plain. Faith, whereby we are freely justified, being nothing less than the union of Christ and the soul, by virtue of which we are accepted of the Father, it is the only mean also whereby we can be enabled to work the works of God; for *without me, separate from me,* says our Lord, *you can do nothing.* This is God's way of justifying a sinner. The creature being in Christ, who *is the way to the Father,* John xiv. 6. God cannot condemn him, without condemning his Son too, because they are one spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 17. On the contrary, God being always well pleased with his well-beloved Son, he is well pleased with the creature that is united to him. Now by this conjunction, the believer receives from Christ a new nature, from whence spring all the fruits of holiness both inward and outward; they abound more and more, as the union increases. So soon as we are in Christ, sanctification then begins, and not before; for in that instant, we begin to partake of the divine nature. Yet this union is not to be expected, but in a diligent waiting upon God, in all his ordinances, for it. And in using the means of grace, we should singly eye this union, so as not to expect a sense of pardon, or a change of heart, any other way, and at the same time be persuaded there is no possibility of missing of either in thus seeking it. We see then the way to have our sins pardoned, our guilt removed, and our souls transformed into the image of God, so as to be made partakers of his holy nature. By this conjunction Christ is made unto believers, wif-

dom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, and therefore unto such he is precious; for *unto you*, saith St Peter, *who believe*, or are one with him, *he is precious*. But then he is only so far precious, as we are united to him; therefore the children of God are called upon to grow in grace, or to seek a greater nearness to him, *who is our life*, till they are wholly lost and swallowed up in this fountain; till each can say, *I live not*, self being totally destroyed, *but Christ liveth in me*. Believers not sufficiently seeing that our growing in the image of God, depends wholly upon this increasing union, seek for the increase of love and other graces, as things separate from Christ. They are not sensible that no grace can be increased without this increase of union, and that of consequence, as one grace increases, all the other graces of the Spirit will increase also, seeing we can have a growth in none, without being more united to our living Head. And we cannot be nearer him, without having more of his image. To see in a clear light, that we cannot grow in a single grace, without growing in all the fruits of the Spirit at the same time; let us consider how it is with children. You know, when they are born, they have all the parts of a man, and as one of their members grows, they all grow, and all at the same time, because they are all united to the same body, from whence they all receive at the same time, that nourishment and life which is needful for them. And so they continue growing, till they arrive to manhood, when every member is perfected. Just so it is with christians. When they are born again, they have all the graces of the Spirit, and as

they grow up into Christ, every grace increases together. If believers would advert more to this, they would save themselves a great deal of trouble, would soon attain to the mind which was in Christ, and enter into a glorious rest. Sanctification, we see then, is carried on only as we are more and more united to Jesus; for he gives us not grace, as a man gives money to his friend: but gives us holiness, by taking us into himself, and the increase of holiness, by incorporating us more with himself. To grow in grace, means to increase in union with Jesus. We first have more of the giver, and then more of his gifts, more of spiritual things, as naturally flowing from him. As before we were joined to Jesus, we enjoyed neither a sense of pardon, peace, joy, love, power, nor any degree of holiness; these can now be only increased, by having more of him from whence they all originally sprung. As holiness cannot be had separate from Christ, so a believer cannot be in Christ, and not be holy. Therefore the more union, the more holiness. In order then to be delivered from the remains of sin, we must have greater oneness with Christ, if I may so speak. Or in the apostle's words, the Lord must so live in us, that we might no longer live. Then in the true sense of the word, we give God our hearts, and are made pure in heart, but not before. Then we know what it means, to have our life hid with Christ in God, to have fellowship with the Father and the Son, to have the Holy Ghost abiding in us, so teaching us all things, and so bringing all things to our remembrance. And then with Enoch we always have this testimony,

that we please God, and how can we but please him, when Christ is the life of our souls, and all our works are wrought in him and by him, Isa. xxvi. 12. Do you then not see, believers, that if you continue in the old tract, seeking holiness to be infused into your souls, as a thing separate from Christ, you cannot attain to Christian Perfection? Perhaps, it will be hard to convince any of you, who are sincere, that you have been doing it. But I will endeavour, as it is a matter of great importance, to convince you, if possible, that you have. It is likely you expect this change to be wrought in you, only by Christ's coming into your hearts, and taking full possession of them; but then do you not expect to have Christ, and your souls which are renewed after his image, as two distinct things in you? Cannot you then see, that this is not being one with Christ, and that you and Christ still remain two distinct things? Whereas Christ tells us, we are one with him, even as he and his Father are one. Will you say, the Father and the Son are distinct from each other? No surely. They are so one, that Christ tells us, that what the Father does, that does He. And this holds good with respect to his members; for that which our Father and Saviour do in us, and by us, we do, and no more. This is a great mystery, that three persons should be but one God! But this is as great, God joining our humanity to his divinity, and becoming one Christ! And this perhaps falls not short of it, that the holy Jesus should join filthy sinners to himself, and that these should become one with the Father. St. Paul, speaking as his master, strengthens my asser-

tion; for he says, that *he who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit!* We might then well say with the same apostle, *great is the mystery of godliness!* Jesus Christ, as God, could not act and suffer in our stead, without taking our nature upon him. Neither can we do and suffer the will of God in an acceptable manner to him, without being joined to his divine nature: The one being as impossible with man, as the other was impossible for God. That these things are so, we know, but to account for them, we cannot. In order to understand this oneness with Christ the better, consider yourself as iron put into fire becomes as fire, receiving of its properties; so you, joined to Christ, are changed into his nature, and become all love and light in the Lord. Or, as a drop of water thrown into the ocean, and there lost; or as liquors, which, when mixed together, become one; the strongest altering the properties of the rest, and making them to partake of its own virtues. Instead of thus understanding this important point, have you not rather looked upon Christ's filling your heart, as you fill a vessel with water, out of a well, notwithstanding which, the vessel and the well remain still two distinct things? Have you ever seen it in this view before? As the food you eat diffuses its nourishing and quickening virtue through all the parts of your body, and enables you to perform the functions of life, even so Christ (who tells us, that *his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed; and they who eat his flesh, and drink his blood, dwell in him, and he in them; and he that eateth him, shall live for ever*) diffuses or spreads himself, by his blessed Spirit, through

the whole soul, till both, being truly incorporated, the whole lump is leavened, and we awake up after his likeness. You know leaven, when put into meal, spreads itself throughout the whole mass, till the one is totally lost in the other. By this, you may understand, what it is to be joined to Jesus Christ in one Spirit; for the one, I take to be a true emblem of the other. Perhaps, one reason, why real christians deny the possibility of a deliverance from sin in this life, is, they see not clearly the manner whereby it can be effected; not conceiving the work must be carried on, and finished, by the same means it was begun. And finding corruption still strong, after many years fighting against it, they think it can only be extirpated by death; and so by their experience, endeavour to explain all those precious promises whereby we may partake of the divine nature quite differently from their plain literal meaning, and make them to mean almost nothing. What shall we do then? Why, instead of crying to the Lord, as formerly, to take this or that sin away, tell the Lord, you expect never to be delivered from the carnal mind, till he is pleased to unite you more closely to himself; and relying firmly upon him, or believing that he will do it, neither seek nor desire deliverance any other way. And when Christ is fully formed in you, as leaven in a measure of meal, you shall be a holy lump unto the Lord. Ask not for the increase of any particular grace, without the increase of this union, which will produce more of every fruit of the Spirit in you. Use all the ordinances diligently, but see that you have only an eye to this conjunction in them. The reason why christians are so unstable, and have so little of the mind which was in Christ, is very plain: In

their pursuit after holiness, they seek not after this oneness. As fruit plucked from a tree soon rots, so our comforts and graces soon die away, because we plucked them, instead of transplanting, (if I may so speak) the tree of life into the garden of our heart, which bears all manner of fruit at all seasons, and whose leaves are for the healing of our souls. Reader, be you thus wise, and you shall love, obey, rejoice, adore, and praise the Lord, and walk before him in holiness and righteousness all your days. Whilst you are thus seeking to be lost in Christ, you may insensibly advance in holiness, till all your sins be totally subdued. Or the Lord may suddenly come to his temple, and when he and his Father come to sup with you, and abide in you, sin must instantly depart. The destruction of sin not being effected by our sufferings and workings, but upon our closer union with Jesus Christ, our happy deliverance may be now. Therefore it may be as instantaneous as the removing of guilt, both being effected by the same means. And as sin dies, holiness will spring up; for that which causes the destruction of the one, will procure the growth of the other. Holiness never grows more sensibly than after the destruction of sin, as corn never thrives better than when the field is cleared from all weeds. Love or hatred, humility or pride, nay all other graces, or their contrary evils, must possess our hearts, therefore, if that which is evil is done away, that which is its contrary good, must instantly step into its place. Though it is true, a soul that is purified (having a clearer view of the purity of God, the infiniteness of all his attributes, and the immense disproportion there is between God and himself, than he before had) might say, I want love and every other grace;

yet this in no wise implies, that he has none of the graces of the Spirit, unless you can suppose one delivered from sin to be as a stone; but it means, that the union such an one has with Christ, is but as that of a tender branch to a tree, which cannot receive now all that sap it will derive from the tree, when it is grown stronger.

By thus describing it, we see how possible it is to be growing, whilst we are in this world. Some, supposing the heart to be full of God, as a vessel is full of liquor, cannot conceive how we can grow, after being full, and therefore abhor the doctrine of Christian Perfection, as carrying sanctification too far. But if we consider it in the view we have been proposing it, perhaps it will not only stop the mouths of gainstayers, but encourage those who seek it still to press after, and expect it in a more evangelical way.

Sanctification is then a progressive work : Though the compleat destruction of the power as well as the removal of the guilt of sin is instantaneous. It begins as soon as we are united to Jesus, and is carried on even after sin is destroyed, and so long as we remain in the body ; seeing we can here enjoy no such union and communion with the Father and the Son, as allows of no daily increase. But let us take care in seeking deliverance from sin, that we do not confine God, and set him a time. Let us rather expect it every moment, till we are made partakers of it. By this close union with Jesus, we shall be all life, and shall be actuated, moved, and strengthened by the Holy Ghost, to do and suffer the whole will of God, which will become our meat and drink. By this union our souls, bodies, and all our concerns, will be

given up to Jesus; and his graces, kingdom, and all things which are for our good, will be made over to us. St. Paul says, Christ being your's, all things are your's. This conjunction therefore will deliver us from all wrong fears, cares, and desires. Let others then seek this or that grace, this or that frame; but let us simply give ourselves up to God through Jesus Christ, carrying all our grievances to him, believing that he will redress them; laying all our wants before him, believing that he will supply them; let us by a firm reliance on the Lord make him our all. When we fall short in duty, or are overcome by sin, in spite of our watching, without being discouraged, let us humble ourselves before the Lord, and tell him, we shall never do better till he gives us more of his Spirit, and unites us more to himself; and believing that he will, let us forget the things that are behind, and set out afresh. When we are kept in the hour of temptation, when we have done any thing well, or when we go on comfortably, and can rejoice before the Lord with a pure conscience, let us say, Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thee be the praise; for, *according to his mercy he saved us*. We should endeavour to have an unshaken confidence in God our Father, and always come to him as children; and seek to be fully united to him and his Son Jesus Christ. If we make Christ our all, then let us no more chuse for ourselves, but leave it to him, who is our wisdom, to chuse for us in every respect; and be persuaded, that what he chuses is best for us. This is living by faith, and this is the way for every grace to grow.

The scriptures, in order to set Christ forth in the most amiable and engaging view, make him every thing to the soul, under the simili-

tudes of meat, drink, cloaths, sun, shield, rock, &c. and shew hereby, that if we are joined to the Lord in one spirit, we can want for nothing. This proves then, that but *one thing is needful*; that is, an union with Christ; or if we have it, a closer union with him. For you see, by having this one thing, you have all other things; and by having an increase of this one thing, you have the increase of all other things.

It might be a great blessing to us, if we saw more clearly, how Christ stands particularly related to us in his various offices. I fear most christians see hardly any difference between Christ a prophet, priest, and king, and Christ made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; therefore by God's assistance I shall endeavour to shew the difference. Christ being our prophet, priest, and king, seems to be only an outward relation; but made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, an inward. As a prophet, he teaches us our duty by his word, spirit, providence, servants, and judgments; but though men are taught, yet they turn not to God, and cannot, till Christ is made to them wisdom; when they become wise to embrace the truths that are revealed to them, and to walk according to the light they have received. He is called our wisdom, because he makes us wise unto salvation. As a priest, he has offered the sacrifice, and has done all the law required for to make full satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and procure pardon and righteousness for sinners. He has entered into the holy of holies, the kingdom of God, and there *ever liveth to make intercession for us*; yet how few receive the remission of their sins, and wherefore? they receive not Christ made to them righteousness by an application of

himself. For we are only righteous, by being in him *the Lord of righteousness*, as Jeremiah calls him. And if we were counted righteous any other way, than by being joined to him; it would be great impropriety to call him our righteousness. Wherefore to be justified by faith, must mean to be justified by being joined to Christ, who is our righteousness; by virtue of which union, his righteousness is imputed to us. Being in Christ the righteous, we must of course be righteous too, and therefore we are acquitted, as soon as this union takes place. To suppose we may be righteous without this, is, to suppose we may be righteous out of Christ, which cannot be. As a king, he has given us laws with severe threatenings, and encouraging promises annexed, in order that all his subjects (that is, all mankind throughout the world) should punctually observe them; but till he is made to us sanctification, we have no power so to do. But then power is immediately communicated to us, when we are united to him, who is our sanctification. Wherefore sanctification begins, as soon as we are justified; for as I observed before, that which is the cause of the one, is also the cause of the other. But above all, Christ is made to us redemption, implying a deliverance from all outward evil, as the grave, hell, &c. And a deliverance from all inward evil, as sin, and whatsoever proceeds therefrom, as fears, cares, &c. And the latter may be accomplished, as I have already shewed, in this life. Reader, let me now beseech you to meditate upon these words; Christ made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. And O! rest not till you have an interest in them all; for they are comfortable words, and full of matter. Yet, observe, they are not to be under-

stood as to set Christ aside; in his prophetic, priestly, or kingly office; for we shall ever want him in every respect the New Testament sets him forth to us. And he is then truly our prophet, when he is all our wisdom; and our priest, when he is all our righteousness; nor can we honour him truly as our king, till he is our sanctification and redemption.

After all that hath been done, to set Christian Perfection forth in a clear and distinct view; some may object, and say, For a man to be perfect, is to rob Christ of the honour that is due to him, by making man proud, and independent of God. Surely such an objection must appear very frivolous, after what I have said concerning it. It is so far from exalting the creature, and robbing Christ of his glory, that nothing exalts Jesus Christ, and humbles the creature equal to it. This doctrine sets Christ on his throne, whilst it keeps the creature in the dust at his feet; and I cannot conceive that any thing else will do it so effectually.—Again, some pious souls may object to the possibility of being delivered from sin, whilst in the body; because that whilst we are in it, we are liable to err in our judgment, and therefore may think, speak, or act, not always exactly as we ought; beside, this animal frame will occasion wanderings in prayer, and other duties, more or less, as it is indisposed. If the pious reader will acquiesce to what follows, I will not dispute the matter with him. By deliverance from sin, I mean not a deliverance from that which is the cause of his objection; but the being freed from all self-will, so as to live wholly in the will of God, so far as we know it, and embrace it as our meat and drink. I understand by it a freedom from pride, so as to have all self annihilated, and

Christ alone exalted, by being made every thing to the believer. It is to have all that is contrary to love done away, and to love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. In one word, I mean, that I am no longer to live, but Christ to live in me; thus I become pure in heart, and always see God. If you grant me but this, I will give up the other; and thus we shall agree, and mean the same thing; or if we differ, it will be only about words.

Now let not some on the one hand apprehend, that I make too little of Christ, and raise the creature too high; for the creature is brought down to nothing, and Christ exalted, as *being all, and in all*. And let not others, on the contrary, suspect, that my ascribing every thing to Christ, and nothing to the creature, will open a door for antinomian licentiousness. For this cannot be, as the faith or union with Christ, which I have recommended, is the only way of establishing the law; the keeping of which being impossible, whilst separate from him. Severed from me, ye can do nothing. What I have advanced, does not make Christ doing all without us in his own person, and leaving us in our sins, as antinomians do; but doing all in us now, as he did all formerly on the cross, and saving us from the pollution as well as from the guilt of sin. To say indeed, Believe you have the thing you want, and you have it, is likely to produce great extravagancies, as it has already done. What lengths of enthusiasm it might lead to we know not. It seems, that all those evils which have lately been broached, and spread by good men, have arisen from mistaken notions of the nature of saving faith. But nothing will so effectually humble, and save us from extravagancies, as such a close

union with, and dependence upon, the Lord Jesus Christ, as I have proved true faith to be.

Now give me leave to enforce what has been said. Whosoever thou art, that readest these lines, I pray that they may prove instrumental to the saving of thy soul. And first, I address myself to you, who are groaning under the burden of a guilty conscience; and I ask, Do you abhor sin? Are your sins your burden? Are you sensible of your unworthiness, and of the depravity of your nature? And do you desire to live to God? If it be so with you, I say, Take courage, use what power you have to keep you from unprofitable company, to avoid what you know is evil, to be found in every known duty; be diligent in all the means of grace, and come to Christ just as you are, persuaded that he will in no wise cast you out. Dare to believe, that notwithstanding the multitude of your sins, he will have mercy upon you; and nothing shall keep Christ and you from being joined in one spirit. Only, whilst you are using the means, remember they are but intended, as bridges for you to walk over to Jesus; and therefore in them, look only for this blessed union. When you fall short in duties, or are overcome by any sin, be not discouraged; but let this stir you up to a greater diligence in the means, especially private prayer, self-denial, and moderate fasting, as your body will allow. In the mean time remember, you will be unstable and weak, till you have your anchor cast even within the veil, that is, till you are fully united to Christ. As nothing can remove guilt from your conscience, make you the children of God, and deliver you from the power of sin, but this faith or union; seek deliverance no other way, expect to be made God's

children through no other means. Believe steadfastly, that the Lord, whom you seek, will be found of you ; and let not your unworthiness keep you from him ; for you will never be better than you are, till you are united to him, therefore you might as well seek the blessing in this way at first as at last. And whilst you are seeking it, the Lord may, in an hour you little expect, and in the most distressing moment, break in upon your soul, and make you one with himself. Your burdens and fears shall then be removed, and you shall derive life from him, whereby you shall rejoice, and bring forth fruit to the glory of God. This is the short and only way, as it is the gospel way of setting poor sinners at liberty from the guilt and power of sin.— Secondly, I shall endeavour to persuade and encourage believers to go forward ; and first I wish that they could examine themselves, whether they are not settling upon their lees, content with what they have received, without seeking a growth in grace ; or if they are pressing forward, whether they are not seeking holiness by the deeds of the law, endeavouring to sanctify themselves ; or, if they are seeking holiness as the free gift of God, through Christ alone, whether they do not seek it as something to be infused into them, or something to be impressed upon them, separate from Christ. To know this, you need not be long at a loss, if you would only impartially examine yourselves, whether you have less of sin in you, more of the mind of Christ, can withstand temptations better, and have more nearness to him in duties, than when you first began to seek deliverance from sin. If it is not so with you, be assured, you have been labouring in vain. Do you not find sin in you at times as strong as ever, though

you have perhaps been ten, fifteen, or twenty years seeking to be delivered from it? And are you not now ready to give over seeking, and to conclude, there is no such state to be enjoyed? Be then but persuaded to seek it in God's way, and you shall soon be convinced from happy experience, that there is such a state to be enjoyed upon earth. Had you but sought it at first in the right way, you might have been a happy witness of it ten or fifteen years ago. Thus to seek holiness, is the surest way of not depending upon duties, and of taking courage, when corruption is strong. Nothing so effectually strips us of self-dependence. See that you give not way to unbelief, because of your unfaithfulness, but dare to believe, that the Lord will cleanse you from all unrighteousness, by becoming your sanctification. Believe that he will do it in spite of your corruption, and all that men or devils can say against it. But be careful, you do not seek deliverance, nor expect it any other way, than by such a close union with Christ, whereby you shall be lost in him as a drop in the ocean. See also that you do not fret, because you are not delivered as soon as you desire; and for what you know, whilst you continue seeking, he may, in a moment, even when sin is at the height, diffuse himself through every faculty of your soul; then all that is in you shall be holiness unto the Lord. It appears to me as impossible to have any dependence upon our performances, or any part of self, in seeking holiness in the manner I have been laying it down, as it is impossible not to depend upon them in a greater or lesser degree, if we seek it any other way.

As this Treatise may fall into the hands of some who are wallowing in sin, or drowning themselves in the pleasures of life, I would, thirdly, speak

a few words to those. All such I earnestly intreat, if they love their souls, and would be happy, to walk according to the light they have received by doing those things they know they ought to do, and by omitting those things they know they should not do; and I beseech them to be much in private prayer, and the other ordinances, that the Lord may convince them of their lost state. This is so necessary a work, that we cannot have that faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, which brings salvation to the soul, before this conviction is wrought in us. For the latter prepares us for the former. And if we die without this faith, we are lost for ever. Therefore, my friends, delay not, as you are not sure of a moment; but *shake yourselves from the dust*, use the means of grace, and call mightily upon the Lord, that he might have mercy upon you. And cease not, till you obtain mercy.

To conclude. I would exhort the serious of every denomination, to let all controversy die away. Instead of disputing about election or perfection, or any other opinion, let us all strive after the inward religion, the life of God in the soul, or being joined to Christ in one spirit, which has been recommended in this Treatise. And if we are already united to Christ, let us endeavour after a daily increase of union with him, looking upon this as the one needful thing, and upon all other things as mere shadows. Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all praise, as is most due, for evermore.

F I N I S.

